

AMERICAN GLOBALITY AND THE US PRISON REGIME: STATE VIOLENCE AND WHITE SUPREMACY FROM ABU GHRAIB TO STOCKTON TO BAGONG DIWA

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Abstract

What do we make of the abiding significance of state-sanctioned human captivity and imprisonment on a massive, unprecedented scale as a primary American modality of civilization? Democracy? Modernity and (postmodern) Nation-building? The American prison intertwines as it animates two structural logics: 1) white supremacy as a historical modality of social (dis)organization, and 2) the circulation, militarization, and mobilization of allegedly local or domestic US social formations across global geographies, including and beyond the Philippines. This paper considers the formation of the United States prison industrial complex as an epochal global regime that is integral to the fabric of an incipient world ordering.

Keywords

American imperialism, American state prison, War on Terror

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INTRODUCTION: AMERICAN GLOBALITY AND CARCERAL STATE VIOLENCE

To consider the US prison as a global practice of dominance, we might begin with the now-indelible photo exhibition of captive brown men manipulated, expired, and rendered bare in the tombs of the US-commandeered Abu Ghraib prison: here, I am concerned less with the idiosyncrasies of the carceral spectacle (who did what, administrative responsibilities, tedium of military corruption and incompetence, etc.) than I am with its inscription of the *where* in which the worst of US prison/state violence incurs. As the bodies of tortured prisoners in this *somewhere else*, that is, beyond and outside the formal national domain of the United States, have become the hyper-visible and accessible raw material for a global critique of the US state—with Abu Ghraib often serving as the

signifier for a *generalized* mobilization of sentiment against the American occupation—the intimate and proximate bodies of those locally and intimately imprisoned *within the localities of the United States* constantly threaten to disappear from the political and moral registers of US civil society, its resident US Establishment Left, and perhaps most if not all elements of the global Establishment Left, which includes NGOs, political parties, and sectarian organizations. I contend in this essay that a new theoretical framing is required to critically address (and correct) the artificial delineation of *the statecraft of Abu Ghraib* prison, and other US formed and/or mediated carceral sites across the global landscape, as somehow unique and exceptional to places outside the US proper. In other words, a genealogy and social theory of US state violence *specific to the regime of the prison* needs to be delicately situated within the ensemble of institutional relations, political intercourses, and historical conjunctures that precede, produce, and sustain places like the Abu Ghraib prison, and can therefore only be adequately articulated as a genealogy and theory of the allegedly “domestic” US prison regime’s “globality” (I will clarify my use of this concept in the next part of this introduction).

Further, in offering this initial attempt at such a framing, I am suggesting a genealogy of US state violence that can more sufficiently conceptualize the logical continuities and material articulations between a) the ongoing projects of domestic warfare organic to the white supremacist US racial state, and b) the array of “global” (or extra-domestic) technologies of violence that form the premises of possibility for those social formations and hegemonies integral to the contemporary moment of US global dominance. In this sense, I am amplifying the capacity of the US prison to inaugurate technologies of power that exceed its nominal relegation to the domain of the criminal-judicial. Consider imprisonment, then, as a practice of *social ordering and geopolitical power*, rather than as a self-contained or foreclosed jurisprudential practice: therein, it is possible to reconceptualize the significance of the Abu Ghraib spectacle as only one signification of a regime of dominance that is neither (simply) local nor (erratically) exceptional, but is simultaneously mobilized, proliferating, and global.

The overarching concern animating this essay revolves around the peculiarity of US global dominance in the historical present: that is, given the geopolitical dispersals and dislocations, as well as the differently formed social relations generated by US hegemonies across sites and historical contexts, *what modalities of “rule” and statecraft give form and coherence to the (spatial-temporal) transitions, (institutional-discursive) rearticulations, and (apparent) novelties of “War on Terror” neoliberalism?* Put differently, what technologies and institutionalities thread between forms of state and state-sanctioned dominance that are

nominally autonomous of the US state, but are no less implicated in the global reach of US state *formation*?

The intent of this initial foray into a theoretical project that admittedly exceeds the strictures of a self-contained journal article is primarily suggestive: on the one hand, I wish to examine how the institutional matrix and technological module of the US prison regime (a concept I will develop in the next section of the essay) is a programmatic (that is, strategic and structural rather than conspiratorial or fleeting) condensation of specific formations of racial and white supremacist state violence and is produced by the twinned, simultaneous logics of social ordering/disruption (e.g. the prison as *both and at once* the exemplar of effective “criminal justice” law-and-order and culprit in the mass-based familial and community disruption of criminalized populations).

On the other hand, I am interested in considering how the visceral and institutionally abstracted logic of bodily domination that materially forms and reproduces the regime of the American prison is *fundamental*, not ancillary, to US state-mediated, state-influenced, and state-sanctioned methods of legitimated “local” state violence across the *global* horizon. To put a finer edge on this latter point, it is worth noting that given the plethora of scholarly and activist engagements with US global dominance that has emerged in recent times, and the subsequent theoretical nuance and critical care provided to treatments of (for example) US corporate capital, military/warmaking capacity, and mass culture, relatively little attention has been devoted to the *constitutive* role of the US prison in articulating the techniques, meanings, and pragmatic forms of state-building within post-1990s social formations, including those of the US’s ostensible peer states, as well as places wherein militarized occupation, postcolonial subjection, and proto-colonial relations overdetermine the ruling order. In place of considering the US prison as a dynamic, internally complex mobilization of state power and punitive social ordering, such engagements tend to treat the prison as if it were, for the most part, a self-evident *outcome or exterior symptom* of domination rather than a central, interior facet of how domination is itself conceptualized and produced.

In this meditation I am concerned with the integral role of the US prison regime in the material/cultural production of “American globality.” In using this phrase I am suggesting a process and module of state power that works, moves, and deploys in ways distinct from (though fundamentally in concert with) American (global) “hegemony,” and inaugurates a geography of biopolitical power more focused than common scholarly cartographies of American “empire.” For my purposes, American globality refers to the postmodern production of US state and state-sanctioned technologies of human and

ecological domination—most frequently formed through overlapping and interacting regimes of profound bodily violence, including genocidal and proto-genocidal violence, warmaking, racist and white supremacist state violence, and mass-scaled imprisonment—and the capacity of these forms of domination to be mobilized across political geographies all over the world, including by governments and states that are nominally autonomous of the United States. American globality is simultaneously a vernacular of institutional power, an active and accessible iteration of violent human domination as the cohering of sociality (and civil society) *writ large*, and a grammar of pragmatic immediacy (in fact, urgency) that orders and influences statecraft across various geographies of jurisdiction and influence.

It is in this sense of globality as (common) vernacular, (dynamic, present tense) iteration, and (disciplining) grammar that the current formation of global order is constituted (obviously) by the direct interventions of the US state and (not as obviously) by the *lexicon* (as in the principles governing the organization of a vocabulary) of US statecraft. American globality infers how the US state conceptualizes its own power, as well as how these conceptualizations of power and American state formation become immediately useful to—and frequently, structurally and politically overbearing on—other state formations and hegemonies. The prison regime, in other words, *is indisputably organic to the lexicon of the US state*, and is thus productive of American globality, not a by-product or reified outcome of it. In the remainder of this essay, I raise the possibility that the US conceptualization of the prison as a peculiar mobilization of power and domination is, in the historical present, central to how states, governments, and social orderings all over the world are formulating their own responses to the political, ecological, and social crises of neoliberalism, warfare, and global white supremacy.

GLOBAL AMERICANA: GUANTANAMO BAY PRISON AS PUBLIC RELATIONS

A recent example illustrates more concretely how the technology of American globality works through the apparatus of the US prison regime. In 2005, members of the US Congress convened what amounted to a choreographed public relations visit to the maximum security units at the military prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The state propaganda and rhetoric surrounding this visit seemed to signify the importance of the US prison apparatus to the fabrication of American globality as something that is, in fact, *good for the world*. The political theater of the Congressional tour organized a state response to an emergent historical question that had obtained momentum since the Bush Administration's

initial declaration of a War on Terror: What, institutionally and allegorically, does the transformation of the prison at Guantanamo Bay into the core carceral element of this perpetual global war *mean* within the schema of contemporary US dominance? Here, it is the prominence of the prison as a staged scene, or perhaps, as an institutionally performative site for the statecraft of Global Americana, that provokes theoretical attention. Reporting for *The Washington Post*, Mike Allen described the visit:

As part of a major Pentagon public relations offensive, dozens of lawmakers are being flown to the maximum-security units here for VIP tours conducted by generals who portray the cells as safe and even comfortable places for suspected terrorists to spend their days....

Republican and Democratic lawmakers say they are drawn to the prison out of curiosity and concern about the physical conditions and treatment of prisoners. House Government Reform Committee Chairman Thomas M. Davis III (R-Va.), who led a small delegation Monday, said close scrutiny is essential to improving the United States' image abroad and "*winning the hearts and minds of the modern Arab world.*" (emphasis added, AO1)

It is the public rehearsal of a certain political script that bears significance in this moment: the global American prison here (momentarily) displaces the more conventional grandstanding abstractions of the US state as a vehicle for "democracy and freedom" in the "modern Arab world" (and other places), and becomes the geographically sited module through which an epochal ideological-spiritual campaign might be "won." It is not merely the *presence* of the US prison that wins hearts and minds, it is the *state's performance through and ongoing crafting* of the prison that forms the lexicon (organizing principle) of an effective global war that does not only desire strategic obliteration, but also articulates as a discursive movement toward authentic hegemony (that is, winning the *consent* of those subjected or effectively "ruled" by American globality). Mike Allen's detailing of the visit continues,

The tours appear to be having the intended effect. Some lawmakers who have made the trip one or more times have praised the conditions there in interviews with their hometown television stations and newspapers. Rep. Jon Porter (R-Nev.), part of Monday's tour, said of the inmates he had seen from a distance: "*Many of them are happy to be there.*" (emphasis added)

Rep. Porter's assertion constitutes a valorization of the prison that ruptures anticipated narratives of righteous punishment, well-administrated criminal justice, or even the wartime necessity of defining and containing "enemy combatants." His is the utterance of a global project that extends beyond the formalities of the Guantanamo Bay prison and resonates no less than a celebration of the end of the (Arab) world: it is under such a historical-ideological mandate that it is entirely rational, logical, and perhaps convincing to simply *say*—with no credible evidence at all *and* with apparent self-assurance—that people held captive under the auspices of legal non-existence and suspension of nominal Geneva Convention rights do *not* experience the "state of exception," but in fact flourish in an affect of well-being and the sober operation of state care. (Interestingly, acclaimed liberal documentary filmmaker Michael Moore's recent product *Sicko* (2007) perpetuates this discursive structure by juxtaposing the US health care system's and state's failure to attend to the serious medical needs of a number of post-9/11 Ground Zero workers/volunteers with the allegedly adequate—even lavish—medical and dental attention given to prisoners at "Gitmo"; while Moore's typically satirical fare may have intended to ridicule the notion of Guantanamo Bay prison as an example of decent and free health care, the political effect of this narrative-visual strategy was to inspire outrage at the notion that the well-being of emblematic "Americans" might be subordinated to the physiological needs of War on Terror detainees.)

Hence, it would be an egregious political and intellectual mistake to dismiss—that is, politically minimize and undertheorize—such public relations campaigns and state propaganda as superficial reflections of the US government's endemic corruption, arrogance, or stupidity. Rather, I am interested in meditating on a historical question that envelops the moment of these and other pronouncements of global power: What are the *conditions of possibility* for Rep. Porter's profound assertion, particularly in the face of massively accumulated evidence (including mounting survivors' testimonials) indicating that the structure of feeling created by the US prison's globality is, in fact, terror? Reports from *The Washington Post* certainly describe terror: Ameen Saeed Al-Sheik, Abu Ghraib detainee No. 151362, thus recounts a defining moment in his imprisonment: "[An American soldier asked:] 'Do you believe in anything?' I said to him, 'I believe in Allah.' So he said, 'But I believe in torture and I will torture you'" (Higham and Stephens AO1+). It is to these conditions of possibility, enacted in the formation and structural logic of the US prison regime, that we now turn.

THE US PRISON REGIME AS WHITE SUPREMACIST (GLOBAL) MOBILIZATION

We might imagine the US prison, not as a discrete institution or reified place, but rather as an abstracted site—a prototype—of organized punishment and (social, civil, and biological) death. I begin this section with two points of departure, in an attempt to initially provoke a conceptualization of the American prison regime that focuses on the intertwining of two structural logics: 1) white supremacy as a historical modality of social (dis)organization, and 2) the capacity of allegedly “local” or “domestic” US social formations to circulate, militarize, and mobilize across global geographies.

The emergence of the American prison industrial complex since the 1970s is generally addressed as a problem of the “American nation,” and until recently has largely been situated by academic scholars, progressive activists, and imprisoned intellectuals within the domains of the domestic social formation. Yet, even the concise definition of the prison industrial complex penned in 2001 by US political prisoner Linda Evans (released in 2001) and activist Eve Goldberg facilitates an inquiry that pushes past parochial geographies of the US national form: “Like the military/industrial complex, the prison industrial complex is an interweaving of private business and government interests. Its twofold purpose is profit and social control. Its public rationale is the fight against crime” (Evans and Goldberg). Beyond the strictures of conventional criminological approaches to the US prison apparatus, Evans and Goldberg are suggesting an organic connection between the architecture of the prison industrial complex and the structuring forces of neoliberalism and globalization: the socioeconomic transformations of US capital, alongside contemporary elaborations of the US racist state in the post-Civil Rights moment, simultaneously a.) fabricate populations vulnerable to criminalization (black, brown, poor, and generically redundant to the contemporary economic organization of the US); b.) withdraw state social services for people most in need of resources for social and biological reproduction; c.) militarize and juridically empower the policing and criminal justice apparatuses in unprecedented ways while amplifying their fundamentally punitive institutional demeanours; and d.) generate a dynamic statecraft, public discourse, and popular culture of policing and imprisonment that organize a grammar of social necessity and ideological consent around the emergence and expansion of the prison industrial complex.

Here we must remember that among the millions of people held captive by the US state in prisons, jails, youth prisons, and immigration detention, people of African descent are imprisoned at rates astronomically high relative to their proportion of the

national population (exceeding 400% of their national demographic proportion), and at rates dwarfing those of white Americans (see Gershowitz). Native Americans repeat this pattern, although their smaller demographic numbers often obscure their heightened criminalization by the US state. Latinos, Latinas, and other racialized brown people are increasingly targeted in ways that directly derive from, and expand, the historical structures of white supremacist policing and imprisonment that target Black and indigenous people, in part through the specificities of migrant/immigrant policing and criminalization. Despite composing the national majority of the US population, white Americans compose less than half of the incarcerated US population. Black, Brown, and indigenous peoples constitute upwards of 60% held captive. For the unfamiliar, a few other facts assist in laying bare the accelerated nature of this massive state-sanctioned project:

1. Between 1972 and 2003, the imprisoned (jail and prison) population in the US increased more than 600%; for the five decades prior to the 1970s, the incarcerated population had remained relatively stable, hovering between 100,000-200,000.
2. The US boasts of the highest rate of incarceration in the world, at 702 per 100,000 in the general population; this rate is between 500 and 800% that of comparable industrialized nations.
3. African Americans are incarcerated at nearly six times the rate of whites (2,290 per 100,000 versus 412 per 100,000), while Hispanics are incarcerated at nearly double the rate of whites (742 per 100,000).
4. According to one of the most rigorous criminological studies to date (examining the period 1980-1996), the imprisonment increase does *not* derive from objective changes in the commission of crimes, but rather is almost entirely owed to politically formed changes in sentencing and criminal justice policy (see Gershowitz).

Thus, as the US prison, jail, INS/Homeland Security detainee and incarcerated youth population approaches and surpasses the 2.5 million mark (as of this writing), the quantitative evidence refracts the prison's qualitative transformation into a fundamental organ of state reproduction and civic ordering.

Variable, overlapping, and mutually constituting white supremacist regimes have in fact been fundamental to the formation and movements of the United States, from racial chattel slavery and frontier genocide to recent and current modes of neoliberal

land displacement and (domestic-to-global) warfare. Without exception, these regimes have been differently entangled with the state's changing paradigms, strategies, and technologies of human incarceration and punishment (to follow the prior examples: the plantation, the reservation, the neoliberal sweatshop, and the domestic-to-global prison). The historical nature of these entanglements is widely acknowledged, although explanations of the structuring relations of force tend to either isolate or historically compartmentalize the complexities of historical white supremacy.

For the theoretical purposes of this essay, white supremacy may be understood *as a logic of social organization* that produces regimented, institutionalized, and militarized conceptions of hierarchized “human” difference, enforced through coercions and violences that are structured by genocidal possibility (including physical extermination and curtailment of people's collective capacities to socially, culturally, or biologically reproduce). As a historical vernacular and philosophical apparatus of domination, white supremacy is simultaneously premised on and consistently innovating universalized conceptions of the white (European and euroamerican) “human” vis-à-vis the rigorous production, penal discipline, and frequent social, political, and biological neutralization or extermination of the (non-white) sub- or non-human. To consider white supremacy *as essential to American social formation* (rather than a freakish or extremist deviation from it) facilitates a discussion of the modalities through which this material logic of violence overdetermines the social, political, economic, and cultural structures that compose American globality and constitute the common sense that is organic to its ordering.

While the US prison industrial complex constitutes a statecraft of perpetual domestic crisis that emerges from this social logic of white supremacy, the US prison *regime* is becoming profoundly undomesticated in a twofold sense: the technologies of carceral racial domination have distended into localities beyond the US proper (they are extra-domestic), while the focused and mundane (though no less severe) bodily violence of the prison's operative functions have constituted a microwarfare apparatus, accessing and penetrating captive bodies with an unprecedented depth and complexity (the regime is in this sense defined by an unhinged, undomesticated violence). In this context, the (racial) formations of punishment and death inscribed on the various surfaces of the US prison regime—from the nearby to the far away—are in fact generally *unremarkable*. It cannot be overemphasized that this carceral formation produces a normal and trite violence, a naturalized facet of American social intercourse across scales and geographies, forming the underside of a civil society that is historically unimaginable outside its modalities of formal exclusion and civil/social neutralization.

Yet, it is precisely as this prison regime rearranges, remobilizes, and redeploys its normalized structure of white supremacist bodily violence into geographies beyond the American everyday that it *momentarily* surfaces as a spectacle of public consumption and even a critical public discourse, in such moments as the photographic revelation of the US military's torture of prisoners at Abu Ghraib. While the "national" scope of the US prison industrial complex constitutes a profound social and political crisis of epochal scale, it also composes an institutional symbiosis that has yielded an authentic conjunctural articulation of state violence that is both organic to the domestic US carceral and capable of rearticulation, appropriation, and mobilization across global geographies.

Thus, to understand the prison as a *regime* is to focus conceptually, theoretically, and politically on the prison as a pliable module or mobilized vessel through which the state generates particular practices of legitimated violence and bodily immobilization. "Prison regime" is a conceptual and theoretical (not a discretely "institutional") phrase that refers to a *modality* through which the state organizes, rationalizes, and deploys specific technologies of violence, domination, and subjection—technologies that are otherwise reserved for deployment in sites of declared war or martial law: in this usage, "prison regime" differentiates both the *scale* and *object* of analysis from the more typical macro-scale institutional categories of "the prison," "the prison system," and, for that matter, "the prison industrial complex." The conceptual scope of this term similarly exceeds the analytical scope of prison management, prison policy, and "the prison (or prisoner's) experience," categories that most often take textual form through discrete case studies, institutional reform initiatives, prison ethnographies, and empirical criminological surveys.

Rather, the notion of a prison regime invokes a "meso" (middle, or mediating) dimension of processes, structures, and vernaculars that compose the state's modalities of self-articulation and self-conceptualization, institutional crafting, and "rule" *across* the macro and micro scales. It is within this meso range of fluctuating articulations of power that the prison is inscribed as both a localization and constitutive logic of the state's production of juridical, spatial, and militarized dominion. A genealogy of the prison regime foregrounds the essential instability—the *unnaturalness*—of its object of discussion, suggesting a process of historical analysis and theorization that methodologically extends beyond 1.) the particular and mystified institutionality of the discrete and narrowly bounded entity we know as The Prison; and 2.) the juridical and institutional formalities of the state's supposed "ownership" of and orderly proctorship over The Prison as it is conventionally conceived.

On the contrary, I am examining the ways in which *it is the prison regime that possesses*

and constitutes the state. I am suggesting a doubled meaning to the notion of “possession.” First, in the sense of a haunting intervention—the state’s “possession” by the sometimes ghostly and always haunting technologies of power and violence that emanate from the prison (echoing sociologist Avery Gordon’s conception of ghosts and haunting as material social forces), and second, as a denotation of the significant political influence of the prison regime’s designated agents and administrators on the broader architecture of the state.

This conceptualization of the prison regime resonates with Michel Foucault’s meditation on the displacement of unitary sovereign powers in modern and postmodern social formations. He is, of course, famously concerned with the production of regimes of power through situated apparatuses and institutions (e.g. the asylum, the clinic, the prison, the military), which in turn circulate power socially through various embodiments, including symbolic orderings, “sciences,” para/military technologies, and strategically sited and situated human bodies. In his lecture of 14 January 1976 Foucault contends:

Our object is not to analyze rule-governed and legitimate forms of power which have a single center, or to look at what their general mechanisms or its overall effects might be. *Our object is, on the contrary, to understand power by looking at its extremities, at its outer limits at the points where it becomes capillary;* in other words, to understand power in its most regional forms and institutions, and especially at the points where this power transgresses the rules of right that organize and delineate it, oversteps those rules and is invested in institutions, is embodied in techniques and acquires the material means to intervene, sometimes in violent ways. (emphasis added 23)

Foucault’s “capillary power” designates the manner in which power circulates, materializing through the form and movement of its outermost (extreme) points of expression. The prison, precisely such a capillary site for the production and movement of power, exerts a dominion that reaches significantly beyond its localized setting. This is to argue that the post-1970s emergence of a reformed and reconceived prison regime has become central to constituting the political logic as well as the material reproduction of the United States social formation.

I am thus reconceptualizing the prison as a putative “centering” and consolidation of power that, in practice, *necessarily exceeds and violates its official directives and juridical norms.* As a regime, the prison functions through excesses and violations, at times uncoded or nominally “illegal,” though generally occurring within generously interpreted rubrics of institutional policy and protocol: that is, this regime *constitutively* belies and abrogates its

“rule-governed” and “legitimate” discursive-institutional inscription as The Prison.

Finally, to situate the prison’s strategically sited technologies of violence and human subjection *as a normal and “everyday” regime of punishment* is to firmly locate these alleged excesses of the state within the larger socio-historical fabric in which they are entangled, and of which they are constitutive. The state’s contemporary modality of power and enunciation—its statecraft—works through the constant exceeding of its announced material boundaries and juridical limits. Brutality, torture, and excess should be understood as an essential element of American statecraft, not its corruption or deviation. This is to suggest that The Prison, as a state articulation of rigidly centered and conservatively ordered institutional power, does not actually exist, and that it is best conceptualized as a rigorously reproduced mythology of sober and narrowly deployed state power. This mythology effectively rationalizes and re-narrates a domestic (or systemically internal) site of aggressively one-sided, racially gendered warfare. It is in this conceptual and theoretical context that the racist bodily violence so excruciatingly rendered in the 2004 Abu Ghraib prison photos (Higham and Stephens AO1+) is in no way unique or exceptional, but rather *forms a small portion of a long historical genealogy of incarceration and punishment*.

FROM ABU GHRAIB TO STOCKTON, CALIFORNIA: RETHINKING THE LOGIC OF THE SCANDALOUS AND THE MUNDANE

Located within a genealogy of the US prison regime, the drama of Abu Ghraib can be understood as significantly entangled with the durable affective and sentimental structures of racial chattel slavery. Literary and cultural theorist Saidiya V. Hartman has convincingly argued that this genealogy of human captivity is founded on the Black captive’s/slave’s availability for the multiply invested coercions of the “free” white master community:

[T]he fungibility of the commodity makes the captive body an abstract and empty vessel vulnerable to the projection of others’ feelings ideas, desires, and values; and, as property, the dispossessed body of the enslaved is the surrogate for the master’s body since it guarantees his disembodied universality and acts as the sign of his power and dominion. (21)

Prison torture and other state practices of carceral bodily violence, within and

beyond Abu Ghraib, can be conceptualized as a technology of captivity that is traceable to the epochal everyday of slavery's regulated antiblack violence.

Reading through Hartman's genealogy, Abu Ghraib becomes "scandalous" only as a globally visible production of the illicit, the private (or secret), *and the normal* of the United States as a social and racial formation that is not only inseparable from, but is in fact produced by its regimes of bodily capture and disintegration. Here, the scandal of hypervisibility enmeshing the prison tortures at Abu Ghraib unwittingly reveals both the normality and *unremarkability* of the US prison regime's historical everyday, which is traceable in its current racialized and white supremacist form to the nominal abolition of racial chattel slavery and the replacement of the slave plantation with new forms of antiblack criminalization and an incipient apartheid prison apparatus; note that the text of the Thirteenth Amendment to the US Constitution, which is commonly referenced as the passage that formally extinguished the institution of slavery in 1865, reads as follows: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, *except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted*, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction" (emphasis added). Thus, the logic of chattel enslavement was formally transposed from the body of the (racially defined) slave to the body of the (racially criminalized) prisoner/convict: as such, the everyday matrices of social and political intercourse historically composed by the epoch of US racial slavery have sustained through the institutional nuances and movements of the prison regime. The exhibited tortures at Abu Ghraib prison, to the extent that they have been treated with analytics and rhetorics invoking (or at least inferring) novelty, uniqueness, and discontinuity with precedent (and for that matter contemporaneous) forms of US militarization and incarceration, have generated a political and theoretical noise that substantively fails to account for their substantive legibility within the prison regime's longer genealogy, as well as the simultaneity of its geographically dispersed violences.

By way of example: virtually simultaneous with the international circulation of the Abu Ghraib photos was a mind-numbing series of revelations in the *Los Angeles Times* regarding the normative operation of the California Youth Authority (CYA), among the largest prison systems in the world devoted to incarcerating children and youth. In April 2004, California State Senator Gloria Romero (a noteworthy progressive critic of the California criminal justice apparatus) publicly released a videotape depicting a pair of CYA officers overpowering and mercilessly beating Vincent Baker and Narcisco Morales in a small office at the Chaderjian Youth Correctional Facility, Stockton, CA (Warren "Videotaping" B1+). CA Attorney General Bill Lockyer chose not to charge the guards

with a crime, citing “insufficient evidence.” A second surveillance tape surfaced the next month, also from Chaderjian YCF, showing another correctional officer releasing a trained German shepherd on Manuel Renteria. Renteria survived the attack, suffering severe nerve damage (Warren “Attack” B1+). A month or so prior to the eruption of the Abu Ghraib scandal, in February 2004, the families of Deon Whitfield and Durrell Taddon Feaster filed claims against the CYA, contending that the two young men’s “suicides” were produced by heinous institutional negligence, cruel and unusual punishment, and hostile indifference to the young men’s medical needs (Chong B6). The CYA was also accused of tampering with evidence after doubts arose over the verity of its hasty characterization of the deaths as suicides. The litany of institutional violence during this most recent period (2004-2005) continues *ad nauseam*, ranging from consistent reports of sexual assault by guards and the ongoing use of long-term (sixty-ninety days) isolation confinement, to the innovation of single person steel cage “classrooms” and the first-resort pepper-spraying of imprisoned mentally ill youth.

I offer this snapshot of normalized “torture” and “brutality” in California youth prisons to suggest that excessive carceral state violence, while nominally illegal, is generally state-sanctioned (that is, unprosecuted and unacknowledged as such) even when it obtains momentary currency in the realm of public discourse. Further, such critical counter-state testimonials addressing the “local” sites of the US prison regime amount, with a few notable exceptions, to little more than a muted echo of the far more widespread and urgent discussions of prison torture that have been articulated by outraged Americans and elements of the global left in relation to prisoners tortured and brutalized under the auspices of the American prison regime, but whom are located *outside* the domestic dominion of the US proper. Thus, throughout 2004, this state-proctored punishment and biological/civil/social death of racially criminalized children and young adults in California largely eluded the most immediate political concern, if not broader social vision, of these multiple US and global publics, which were preoccupied with making political fetish of the US military’s prisons in Cuba and Iraq.

While the CYA’s (non)scenes of captivity and bodily violence preceded, accompanied, and enmeshed the international spectacle of Abu Ghraib prison, they ultimately merely reinscribed a domestic structure of punishment and death that has been 1.) culturally assimilated into the normative functioning of the US state and its presumed symbiosis with civil society; 2.) institutionally integrated into American modalities of social reproduction across scales of locality, region, and nation; and 3.) politically coded as a necessary evil, that is, hegemonically constructed as a primary technology of post-1970s

“law and order” and the executor of a presumptive communal and personal “security.”

Looking closely at the current formation of the US prison regime, in this sense, illuminates the white supremacist animus of what many call the American empire. The violence of US-led neoliberal globalization and American state-fashioned (declared and covert) warfare actually speak to the complexity of the US prison regime as a *production* (and no less as a harnessing and deployment) of technologies of racial bodily violence. This also suggests a practical/activist and scholarly/theoretical centering of white supremacy (in particular, white supremacist state violence) as a fundamental condition of American globality in this moment. A new paradigm of state and state-sanctioned, mass-based and intimate coercion posits strategic, racially articulated human imprisonment (and the violence therein) as the *premise* (rather than the utilitarian and self-contained “means”) of hegemonic power itself: thus, American global statecraft has become unimaginable outside its prominent productions of incarcerating technologies as material paradigms of dominance, occupation, and political ascendancy.

There is a surface resonance here with Negri and Hardt’s conceptualization of Empire as the “right of the police”:

In order to take control of and dominate such a completely fluid situation, it is necessary to grant the intervening authority (1) the capacity to define, every time in an exceptional way, the demands of intervention; and (2) the capacity to set in motion the forces and instruments that in various ways can be applied to the diversity and the plurality of the arrangements in crisis. Here, therefore, is born, in the name of the exceptionality of the intervention, a form of right that is really a *right of the police*. The formation of a new right is inscribed in the deployment of prevention, repression, and rhetorical force aimed at the reconstruction of social equilibrium: all this is proper to the activity of the police. (Hardt and Negri 16-17)

In fact, the notion of American globality I have begun discussing here already exceeds Negri and Hardt’s formulation to the extent that it is a global *racial formation*, and more pointedly a global mobilization of a *white supremacist social formation* (read: a United States of America formed by the social-economic geographies of racial chattel slavery and their recodification through the post-13th Amendment innovation of other technologies of criminalization and imprisonment).

The US prison regime’s production of human immobilization and death composes some of the fundamental modalities of American national coherence. It inscribes two

forms of domination that tend to slip from the attention of political theorists, including Negri and Hardt: first, the prison regime strategically *institutionalizes* the biopolitical structures of white racial/nationalist ascendancy—it quite concretely provides a definition for white American personhood, citizenship, freedom, and racialized patriotism. Second, the prison regime reflects the moral, spiritual, and cultural inscription of Manifest Destiny (and its descendant material cultural and state-building articulations of racist and white supremacist conquest, genocide, and population control) across different historical moments.

To invoke and critically rearticulate Negri and Hardt's formulation, the focal question becomes: How does the right of the US-as-global police to kill, detain, obliterate become *voiced, juridically coded, and culturally recoded*? The structure of presumption—and therefore relative political silence—enmeshing the prison's centrality to the logic of American globality is precisely evidence of the fundamental power of the US prison regime within the larger schema of American hegemony. In this sense the US prison regime is ultimately really not an "institution." Rather it is a *formulation of world order* (hence, a dynamic and perpetual labor of *institutionalization* rather than a definitive modernist institution) in which massively scaled, endlessly strategized technologies of human immobilization address (while never fully resolving) the socio-political crises of globalization. The US prison regime defines a *global logic of social organization* that constitutes, mobilizes, and prototypes across various localities. What would it mean, then, to consider state-crafted, white supremacist modalities of imprisonment as the *perpetual end* rather than the self-contained means of American globality?

I am suggesting a conception of the prison regime that focuses on what cultural and political theorist Allen Feldman calls a "formation of violence," which anchors the contemporary articulation of white supremacy as a global technology of coercion and hegemony. Feldman writes,

The growing autonomy of violence as a self-legitimizing sphere of social discourse and transaction points to the inability of any sphere of social practice to totalize society. Violence itself both reflects and accelerates the experience of society as an incomplete project, as something to be made. (5)

As a formation of violence that self-perpetuates a peculiar social project through the discursive structures of warfare, the US prison regime composes an acute formation of racial and white supremacist violence, and thus houses the capacity for mobilization of an

epochal (and peculiar) white supremacist global logic.

This contention should not be confused with the sometimes parochial (if not politically chauvinistic) proposition that American state and state-sanctioned regimes of bodily violence and human immobilization are somehow self-contained “domestic” productions that are exceptional to the United States of America, and that other “global” sites simply “import,” imitate, or reenact these institutionalizations of power. In fact, I am suggesting the opposite: the US prison regime exceeds as it enmeshes the ensemble of social relations that cohere US civil society, and is fundamental to the geographic transformations, institutional vicissitudes, and militarized/economic mobilizations of “globalization” generally. To assert this, however, is to also argue that the constituting violence of the US prison regime has remained somewhat undertheorized and objectified in the overlapping realms of public discourse, activist mobilization, and (grassroots as well as professional) scholarly praxis.

Here I am arguing that it is not possible to conceptualize and critically address the emergence and global proliferation of the (US/global) prison industrial complex outside a fundamental understanding of what are literally its technical and technological premises: namely, its complex organization and creative production of *racist and white supremacist bodily violence*. It is only in this context, I would say, that we can examine the problem of how “The Prison” is a *modality* (and not just a reified product or outcome) of American statecraft in the current political moment. It is only a theoretical foregrounding of the white supremacist state and social formation of the United States that will allow us to understand the US prison regime as an American globality that *materializes as it prototypes* state violence and for that matter, “state power” itself through a specific institutional site.

A POINT OF DEPARTURE: PRISON MASSACRES, WARS ON DRUGS, AND TRANSPACIFIC CARCERAL FORMATIONS

The nuances and possibilities of American globality reflect in the shifting carceral formation of the Philippines, which is already poised to at least significantly (if not almost entirely) inaugurate a prison-policing-criminal justice nexus that reflects and refracts that of its longtime colonial, neocolonial, and neoliberal relation to the United States. The 2005 atrocity at Bagong Diwa Prison (see Abou-Alsamh), which is only one of many otherwise unremarkable carceral mobilizations of the politically homicidal Philippine state, offers one appropriate point of departure for this concluding analytical reflection. On March 15, at this well-known prison near the outskirts of Manila, the Philippine National Police (PNP)

massacred 22 imprisoned Muslims—a slaughter distinguished only by the fact that the deadly police raid of the facility was shown on national television. To consider the gravity of the Bagong Diwa standoff is to also suggest that the *site, scene, and statecraft* of the prison massacre constitutes a landmark departure in the post-martial law history of the Philippine state, as well as for the social formation within which it is situated.

Aided by US-trained Philippine paramilitary and US influenced SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) assault team style units, the PNP smashed a one-day old rebellion of over a hundred prisoners at Bagong Diwa with a massive deployment of gunfire, poisoned gas, and armored personnel. According to Philippine state officials, two political prisoners and leaders of the Abu Sayyaf insurgency disarmed and killed three prison guards on March 14, which in turn provoked the larger rebellion. The rebellion made two immediate demands: 1.) quick and fair trials; and 2.) a moratorium on the Philippine government's military operations against Muslim independence/sovereignty fighters and civilians in the southern Sulu region. Despite the rush of government and media propaganda that characterized the alleged leaders of the prison rebellion as "Al Qaeda-linked," this particular rebellion exceeded any insular sectarian agenda. Rather, the Bagong Diwa uprising revealed a profound—and perhaps unprecedented—political opposition to the institutionalized dehumanization of the Philippine prison regime in the "post-martial law" period.

The Bagong Diwa rebellion echoes a recent and global lineage of anti-authoritarian and counter-state prison insurrections from Attica, New York, to Robben Island, South Africa. The Bagong Diwa prison rebels eventually revised the rebellion's original platform, and reissued four demands: 1.) freedom from bodily harm in the resolution of the standoff (a crucial public demand in the face of a PNP that was painstakingly prepping its domestic warfare weaponry in anticipation of a propagandistic media spectacle); 2.) timely and fair hearings of their collective cases; 3.) respect for human rights (which was a gesture for political solidarity from the Philippine and global Left); and 4.) access to media in order to air long-standing grievances with the prison administration. The recent historical record of the Philippine jail and prison apparatuses contextualizes these demands: in 2004, as in recent years, the Philippine Commission on Human Rights named the PNP as the nation's most consistent and flagrant abuser of human and civil rights. The November 2004 slaughter of a dozen striking sugar plantation workers in the Tarlac province, for example, capped a touchstone year of state-conducted and state-sanctioned political killings, including the open assassination of numerous progressive and radical activists, human rights workers, and journalists. In August 2006, Amnesty International

availed that the Philippines is bearing witness to a veritable renaissance of state-sanctioned political assassination and blatant violations of fundamental human rights, including the programmatic extermination of “leftist or left-oriented groups” (Amnesty).

In excess of political killings, the Philippine government’s intensified campaign against poor drug users, addicts, and low-level dealers has resulted in a dramatic increase in the jail and prison population, as only 3.5% of the detained can afford to post bail, and most are forced to wait extremely long periods for their day in court. The PNP is notorious for kidnapping, torturing, and periodically killing ordinary civilians who have been arrested and/or detained under the auspices of this “war on drugs” as well as other, more arbitrary circumstances. Gambit (a pseudonym), a veteran Manila women’s jail guard interviewed by the author in late 2006, summarized the condition in which he worked:

Everything’s overcrowded.... Because of the (changes in drug) law, the jail population has increased.... It began about six years ago, with the Congress’ passing of RA 9165.... The drug war has been going on for awhile ... but over the last five years, the jail population increased suddenly. We’re really overcrowded. Our normal occupancy is 200 persons. Now, we’re at 552. Last year, we reached 634.... The average time people wait for their drug trials is two years.

The initiation of an authentic war on drugs in the Philippines has closely followed the script established by the early-to-mid 1980s Reagan Administration. As Gambit notes, the Philippine Congress passed (and Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo signed) the momentous national drug law RA 9165 in 2002, establishing both the juridical form and political mandate to accelerate the already-intensive policing, punishment, and detainment of targeted population pockets in Manila and elsewhere. RA 9165, also known as the “Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act” (echoing the Reagan Administration’s template-setting 1984 Comprehensive Crime Control Act), accomplished a sweeping pronouncement of domestic warfare against anyone arrested for drug possession (including the implementation of the death penalty for dealers caught with 50 grams of shabu, an amphetamine), and facilitated Arroyo’s allocation of one billion pesos for the “war against drugs.” The Act also created (again in resonance with the US drug war’s institutional matrices) the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA, invoking its notorious American counterpart, the DEA), which was charged with enforcing RA 9165 through militarized campaigns against selected drug suppliers and “community policing” type efforts (suggestive of First Lady Nancy Reagan’s headlining of the omnipresent “Just

Say No” propaganda of the mid-1980s). Arroyo, picking up the example set by the Nixon Administration of the early late 1960s and early 1970s, also prevailed on the momentum of RA 9615 to reorganize and coordinate the labyrinthine tangle of law enforcement agencies throughout the Philippines, and issued a number of executive demands on provincial governors around the country.

Recent assessments by a number of state and non-governmental organizations have revealed that Philippine prisons and jails lack basic infrastructure, and are extremely overcrowded: reflecting Gambit’s revelation, Manila jails consistently operate at more than 300% capacity, while the nation’s primary prison bloats at 500% of operating capacity. These institutions consistently fail to provide imprisoned people with basic nutritional sustenance: most facilities lack drinkable water, and poor ventilation helps spread sickness and has caused an unknown number of preventable deaths. According to a 2005 report issued by the US Department of State, people imprisoned in the Philippines are most often forced to depend on their families or other providers for food because of “the insufficient subsistence allowance and the need to bribe guards to receive food rations” (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor). Finally, as alluded to in the demands issued by the Bagong Diwa rebels, the Philippine judicial process is inordinately slow and inefficient, and contributes greatly to the endemic possibility of prison and jail insurrections as well as individual escape attempts.

In light of this veritable state of emergency, the four-point Bagong Diwa platform in fact appears rather sober and tame. The insurrection, which refrained from a large-scale killing of prison guards in exchange for a violently interrupted negotiation with the state, was largely structured as a politically principled response to the atrocities normalized by the Philippine prison system. Further, the substance of the Bagong Diwa demands echo the classical communiqués penned and voiced by imprisoned liberationists (overwhelmingly of African, Mexican, Native American, and Puerto Rican descent) in the Folsom Manifesto (1970) and Attica Rebellion (1971), as well as the current generation of political discourse emerging from such places as the Lexington (KY) Women’s High Security Unit (1988-1989), Central California Women’s Facility (1997), Pelican Bay (CA) Security Housing Unit (2001), and the Guantanamo Bay detention facility (2002-present), among other sites of human captivity. The rebels of Bagong Diwa, whether or not one finds sympathy with the ideological persuasions of their alleged leaders, can nonetheless be apprehended as part of a contemporary, living history of rebellions by imprisoned women, men, and children against prison regimes—including that of the Philippines—that have been formed, inspired, and otherwise influenced by the expansive institutionalized violence of the US state.

The Philippine national government, under the leadership of President Arroyo and with the eager cooperation of both the PNP and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), has apparently learned valuable lessons from the contemporary emergence of the US prison regime. By way of example, it is worth considering the significance of an otherwise unnoticed April 2006 announcement issued by the US Embassy in the Philippines:

More than 50 Philippine law enforcement specialists will graduate from a week-long prison management seminar sponsored by the US Government in a ceremony being held on Friday, April 28....

The sessions in “Advanced Prison Management” were led by two expert instructors from the US Department of Justice’s International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP). The 53 seminar participants were drawn from several Philippine government agencies, including the Bureau of Jails and Penology Management, the Philippine National Police, and Department of Social Welfare and Development.

The interview with Gambit reinforced the language of this agenda while suggesting that such intergovernmental conversations have obtained consistency and momentum since at least 2002:

DR: Do you know if there have been any conversations between the Philippine jail and prison administration and those in the US?

G: Oh yes, there are officers that go [to the US] for seminars.

DR: What do they teach in these seminars?

G: The officers go to the States, they go to penology seminars; the officers and wardens show off their pictures from the trips, so I see them. Only the officers get to go. These seminars started in Washington, DC.... Their focus is on turning the jails in the Philippines into “therapeutic communities” ... they want the jailers to have “positive interactions” with the prisoners.... The officers disseminate this information to us [the guards].

The strong advisory and supervisory roles exerted by US military and government officials, along with the increasingly international presence of American prison administrators and “correctional officers” (prison guards) in and beyond the Philippines thus suggests a particular historical accounting of such events as the Bagong Diwa prison siege: that

is, this massacre (alongside other moments of Philippine carceral formation) implicates substantively more than the contained violence of the Philippine National Police or even the Philippine national government.

Rather, according to (in turn) Local Government Secretary Angelo Reyes, Presidential Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, and Pres. Arroyo herself, the events of Bagong Diwa prison encompassed an embryonic architecture of domestic carceral warmaking, premised on the technologies of criminalization, policing, and nation-building:

“The message is, anybody who tries something like this in the future will be dealt with in a similar fashion.” (Reyes qtd. in “Abu Sayyaf Leaders”)

“We do not intend to please everybody. The government did what was necessary and we believe we have the support of the majority of the people.... (Bunye qtd. in Office of the Press Secretary “Palace”)

[T]he President commended the law enforcers “who risked life and safety” and said they “exemplify the best of the criminal justice system.” ... [The President said] “The rule of law is supreme. The law enforcers who risked life and safety in Bicutan exemplify the best of the criminal justice system.” (Arroyo qtd. in Office of the Press Secretary “GMA”)

“We must ever be prepared to face the wayward forces that threaten our freedom, our streets and our homes. We must be prepared to fight evil with our moral will to uphold what is good and right.” (Arroyo qtd. in “Abu Sayyaf Leaders”)

It is in the broader context of this historical snapshot that frames my argument that the emergence, expansion, and everyday functioning of the US prison regime offers both a material genealogy and pragmatic institutional framework through which other national governments—in particular those in (neocolonial) political alliance with American globality—may conceive, modify, and deploy new modes of political repression, social control, and domestic warfare. There are thus several, tightly entwined common threads that link Bagong Diwa to the emergence of the US prison regime as the preeminent global matrix for large-scale human immobilization and punishment.

First, Bagong Diwa entailed a coordinated and public slaughter of imprisoned human beings by a domestic police force under the open sanction of a national government: President Arroyo minced no words when she averred in the hours after the killings that the dead Muslims (“terrorists”) deserved their fate, and that the law enforcers

involved in the massacre “exemplify the best of the criminal justice system.” While the scenario of the prison massacre is neither new nor unique in the Philippines, Bagong Diwa introduces an additional element: here, the state-proctored slaughter of prisoners is neither cause for scandal nor is it concealed from public view. In fact, March 15, 2005 introduced the collaboration and corroboration of the mass media as well as the mobilization of a popular (and global) consensus that draws from the sturdy ideological toolboxes of “law and order,” “national/Homeland security,” and “anti-terrorism.” Such is the common language of the US prison regime writ global.

Second, Bagong Diwa demonstrates how the state’s organized killing of its own captives—whether by siege, individual assassination, medical neglect, or other means—can pronounce and perform a *logic of human expendability*, often defined through the overlapping categories of “race,” region, and religion. In the case of Philippine prison and criminal justice system, poor, indigenous, and Muslim peoples are clearly primed for social liquidation, while in the US, poor people of African, Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Native American descent are most frequently targeted for group-based punishment and periodic elimination.

A third, interesting convergence between these seemingly distant sites of incarceration: in US and Philippine prisons, jails, and youth facilities, Muslims—many of whom, in the US, are Black “prison converts”—consistently constitute a captive political bloc, often taking the lead in challenging prison guards and administrators in moments of crisis or insurrection. There is all the more reason for imprisoned Muslims (including and beyond members and affiliates of the Abu Sayyaf) to embody the leading edge of insurgency against proliferating state terror and institutionalized dehumanization.

The immediate aftermath of March 15, 2005 entwines the fourth thread connecting Bagong Diwa to the global expansion of the American prison regime: it is wholly possible that the legacy of this rebellion and state-conducted massacre will facilitate an era of Philippine “prison reform” and prison expansion, both of which will undoubtedly be informed, assisted, and politically supported by the US government and military, as well as its expansive prison establishment. There is historical precedent for this possibility: it was in the immediate aftermath of the Folsom Manifesto, Attica rebellion, and a number of other early 1970s insurrections by politicized imprisoned people in the US that the foundation was poured for the industrialization and astronomical multiplication of the prison apparatus as a primary method of political repression and social (dis)organization. Reformist calls for institutional change resonated through the mid-to-late 1970s, as a fragile alliance of imprisoned activists, “prisoners’ rights” supporters, attorneys, liberal

policymakers, criminologists, judges, elected officials, and prison administrators enacted a broad agenda that would ostensibly improve prison living conditions (for example, alleviating the overcrowding and undernourishment of “inmates”), stamp out the most heinous forms of institutional corruption, and “professionalize” (and multiply) prison staff.

This generally well-intentioned reformist agenda, however, was quickly absorbed into the political impetus and economic drive for more and “better” prisons. In concert with the racist and anti-poor mobilization of the reactionary “War on Drugs” of the 1980s, the United States increased its total incarcerated population almost tenfold in about one generation: by 1990, more than a million people were held in American jails and prisons and shortly thereafter the US became the world’s per capita leader in human warehousing (see Wacquant). The rapid growth of women’s prisons through the 1990s, and the more recent transformation of US “immigrant detention” facilities (through the militarization of the US-Mexico border and domestic War on Terror) have further extended the scope of this apparatus.

As such, the Philippines is poised for a dramatic prison and jail expansion, buttressed by a state and popular mandate to “reform” the institutional methods and enhance the bureaucratic scale of its capacities to mass-incarcerate. The Arroyo administration, in concert with the PNP and AFP, will likely justify a commitment to Philippine “law and order” by pointing to things like the Bagong Diwa insurrection and a constellation of other mobilizations and movements as alleged threats to national and local “security,” particularly in the long-cast shadow of American globality and its resident articulation as War on Terror neoliberalism.

The final and most important strand linking the Bagong Diwa massacre to the globality of the US prison regime is the political onus it bears upon people who are committed to struggle for human liberation and freedom in the face of such overwhelming state violence. A profound and potentially revitalizing political possibility remains embedded in this moment of mourning and commemoration. This possibility opens with the recognition that the Bagong Diwa tragedy of March 15, 2005 is an allegory of the everyday for the increasing numbers of ordinary people who must suffer and die at the hands of the PNP, the Philippine jail and prison apparatus, and the US prison regime writ large. There is, in other words, a *kinship of captivity* that is shared by ever-increasing numbers of people in localities across the world that are somehow touched by the virus of American globality, and its unholy matrimony of mass-based human immobilization and acute bodily punishment.

A mounting movement for the fundamental transformation of the American prison,

policing, and criminal justice systems has taken flight since the late 1990s and has begun to blossom in the resurgence of the late 19th century US abolitionist movement, whose most revolutionary dreams—the decisive overthrow of slavery, white supremacy, US apartheid, and normalized state terror—remain to be fulfilled. As this movement grows in relevance and political scope, it has become increasingly clear that Filipina/o activists, teachers, writers, professional intellectuals, and ordinary people are situated to assume an epoch-shaping responsibility in rendering themselves accountable to a living history. The nightmare of the American prison regime is bleeding into our very pores, as its violence is literally becoming the way of the world—even and especially in our so-called “homelands.” Bagong Diwa has abruptly called us forth as protagonists in this state of emergency. As the soil hardens on the mass graves of the 22 prisoners killed at Bagong Diwa, the question remains as to whether and how we will muster a response.

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